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## Tithing Under the Gospel

*A Sermon, preached at Mendota, (Ill.) Camp Meeting by  
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bution.*

Scripture lesson, Ephesians 4: 1-16, inclusive.  
Text. 1 Cor. 12:31—"Covet earnestly the best  
gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent  
way."

### Introductory

The occasion for this language, was a misunder-  
standing as to spiritual gifts enjoyed by the Corin-  
thian church. Founded by the apostle Paul at  
his first visit to Corinth, during a stay there of a  
year and six months, they had been carefully in-  
structed and left in full possession of all needful  
information. Nevertheless they had come to mis-  
understand the proper and wise use of the gifts of  
the Holy Spirit. Therefore the apostle wrote  
them his first letter, in which three entire chapters,  
the 12th, 13th and 14th, are devoted to this sub-  
ject, and are sufficient, if carefully studied, to set-  
tle all honest misapprehension upon this import-  
ant and often misunderstood question. Notice  
here this important fact, that sincere Christians,  
having and exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit,  
**MAY HONESTLY MISUNDERSTAND  
AND MISUSE** those gifts.

Paul in correcting this mistake did not condemn  
these gifts, but taught their proper use and regu-



lation upon common sense principles, subject always to the governing influence of divine love in the heart. Some gifts were more important than others. All had their proper scope and place. Zeal in exercising them should be according to knowledge. Their way had not been according to the welfare of the body. There was

"A More Excellent Way."

This principle underlies all Christian work. We may be perfectly honest, entirely sincere and very zealous in the Christian profession, but our way may be not **THE BEST** way. We need to make sure that our methods of Christian work are fully in harmony with the fundamental principles of the "new" and "better" covenant. Heb. 8: 6, 8.

Among many other high privileges of the Christian faith is the grace of giving **CHEERFULLY AND LIBERALLY**. In his second letter to this same Corinthian church, Paul devotes two chapters, the 8th and 9th, to this very important Christian grace. He does not present it as a duty, but seven times calls it a "grace"—a divine favor or gift. Five times in chapter 8 and twice in chapter 9 the word "grace" is used of giving. Twice this word has the marginal rendering "gift" (2 Cor. 8: 6, 19). The grace of giving our means for the service of God is compared and placed alongside "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" in giving himself for us. 2 Cor. 8: 1, 6, 7, 9, 19.

The meaning of grace in the Scriptures is favor, particularly divine favor, the unmerited favor of God. To be able to give ourselves as freely, gladly and fully as Christ gave himself, according



to our limited ability, is to be like Christ—a grace or favor most of all to be desired, and possible to all saints. God delights to give to his creatures all that is good for them, all they can really enjoy. He wants us to be like Himself, and like Jesus Christ—loving, gracious givers—up to the measure of our ability. God does not need our gifts, for they all came from Him originally, and He is always pouring out of his good things upon even the unthankful. As He is the perfection of goodness, and loves his creatures, he wants us to be like himself, having made man at first in His own image and likeness.

### Early Lessons in Giving

We do not know when God first taught man to give, but it was certainly made a duty after man fell into sin. He could only worship God by giving the best he had, first fruits of the soil or of the flock. He must lay these upon a rough stone altar and burn them, as an offering to God. Strange it may have seemed to man, thus to require him to destroy by fire, fruits needed for his subsistence, or animals needed for his comfort and clothing, in order to please God. This was the obedience of faith. It was profoundly typical. Cain rebelled against the blood-shed of an animal sacrifice, and fell into the sin of shedding his own brother's blood in a fit of jealous rage. All through the patriarchal age no other worship was acceptable. Even Noah, when he had just escaped the deluge with a small stock of animal creatures to replenish the post-diluvian world, must take of all clean beasts and birds, that seemed so greatly needed, and sacrifice them, burn them up—in order to worship God. What



a waste this must have seemed at that time! But Noah walked by faith and not by sight (See Gen. 8: 20-22). It pleased God to see that Noah was faithful to the divine law of giving, because of its deep significance and momentous importance to human salvation, and He at once made a gracious covenant with Noah for all his descendants. Gen., chapter 9.

When we come to the time of Abraham, not only giving, but systematic or proportionate giving was in practice. We are not told when or how it came about, but when Abraham, himself a patriarchal priest, and a prophet, met a greater priest than himself, Melchizedek, who was probably Shem (who lived 502 years after the flood, contemporary with Abraham 150 years and with Isaac 50 years), he gave Melchizedek a tithe or tenth of all the spoil he had just taken in battle. This was an act of worship, a thank offering from Abraham for success and the blessing of the most high God, of whom Melchizedek was Abraham's ancestral high priest. See Gen. 14th chapter and Heb. 7th chapter.

#### Tithing Made a Law

This divine rule of tithing was handed down by Abraham to his descendants, and when Jacob, his grandson, was in great need of divine protection, he offered or gave part of his little store of oil, pouring it upon the stone he had made his pillow, and vowed to God the tenth of all he should receive through his own toil (Gen. 28: 20-22). When Moses gave to Israel their national law of worship, by divine command he made it rigorously obligatory to tithe all their increase and give it to the priesthood and Levites for their support.



We must not stop here to trace this rigorous law, which is well known to have been practiced to such an extent that in Solomon's time, at the dedication of the Temple, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were sacrificed by Israel **AT ONE TIME** (1 Kings 8 : 62-64). What an enormous waste this seems to us, but it was the only way they could give to God proportionately, as He had appointed. God was pleased with that sacrifice, as the record shows. However, we must remember that that was an age of type, and these offerings so costly were profoundly typical.

No doubt Israel were often unfaithful to the law of proportionate giving enjoined by Jehovah, as they were to other requirements. For their sins the prophets continually reprovved them, and God finally sent them into captivity 70 years. Upon their return the law of tithing fell into disuse, and Malachi was commissioned to speak and write with special reference to the folly of thus robbing God. His admonitions were no doubt heeded by many. In the time of our Lord the Pharisees gloried in tithing even their garden herbs, mint, anise and cummin, which the Saviour approved of but rebuked them severely for their great sin of hypocrisy.

### A Better Way

We now come to the institution of the Gospel, which is in all respects "a more excellent way" of sacred worship and of God's service than that of any preceding age. The distinguishing feature of the Gospel as compared with preceding times is **ENTIRE FREEDOM FROM ALL COMPULSORY LEGALISM**. Under the patriarchal system bloody sacrifices were com-



pulsory. There was no other way of worship acceptable to God. In Abraham's day circumcision became obligatory upon all who would enjoy the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Under Moses the Mosaic law was added, including many rites and ceremonies, feasts, sabbaths, etc., too numerous to mention. All these are dropped entirely by our Lord, and were not enjoined upon his disciples. The gospel itself is termed by James "The perfect law of liberty." James 1:25.

Neither Christ nor his apostles enjoin any LAW of tithing upon the disciples or churches of Christ. The only mention of tithing under the Gospel is found in Matt. 23: 23, repeated in Luke 11: 42; also the unaccepted prayer of the Pharisee—Luke 18: 12; also in some references to Abraham as a tither—Heb. 7: 2-9. None of these passages enjoin tithing in this dispensation, as will be readily admitted. The apostles of Christ, including Paul, were all Jews, brought up under the tithing system, and conscientious, faithful teachers of the gospel, but in none of their utterances or writings do they state that they were tithers themselves, nor do they recommend the practice as a means of gospel support.

In Acts 15th chapter we are given a full account of the first Christian Council at Jerusalem, called for the express purpose of settling whether or not the legal requirements of the Mosaic law should be taught the Gentile converts and churches. Here was the place to enjoin tithing, if it should be made an obligation under the gospel, but not a word was said about tithing, any more than of sabbath keeping. In fact the same argument that would enjoin tithing as a Christian duty



to God, would also logically enjoin the observance of the seventh day sabbath and the Mosaic system in general.

### Christ Commended Free and Liberal Giving

What therefore are we to conclude? That giving is not a gospel requirement? By no means! Christ himself enjoined giving upon all his followers **WITHOUT STINT OR LIMIT**, and commended the poor widow who gave her **ALL**, above all other examples. Under Christ's ministry Zacchæus gave half his goods to the poor, and one rich young man was enjoined by Christ to sell his property and give it to the poor, as a condition of discipleship. In 2 Cor. 8th and 9th chapters, as we have previously seen, also in many other passages, inspired apostles enjoined giving freely and liberally, even though in "deep poverty," urging the example of Jesus Christ, who "though he was rich," for our sakes "became poor," that we might through his grace have the boundless riches of eternal life. 2 Cor. 8: 2, 3, 7-9.

From these facts, and many scriptures that we cannot take time to cite, it is clear that the Gospel really lifts giving above the legalism of the law of Moses, or even the days of the patriarchs, and makes it a glad, free service. It does **NOT EXCLUDE TITHING** at all, nor any other form of systematic giving, nor rob it of its blessing, **BUT TURNS TITHING INTO A FREE VOLUNTEER SERVICE OF LOVE**, by relieving it from compulsory obligation. The gospel virtually says, "Christ gave **ALL** for us, what will you do for him?" If tithing under the law was the least that God would accept before



the Holy Spirit was given to change the natural selfish heart, is it reasonable that we can glorify God now and give LESS than a tenth?" But as there are struggling followers of Christ under hard conditions of life, it does not say as did the law, "Thou shalt," but rather: "Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, NOT grudgingly or OF NECESSITY, for God loveth a cheerful [a willing and free] giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you [beloved fellow servants who know not this wonderful secret] that ye, having ALLSUFFICIENCY IN ALL THINGS, may abound to every good work." 2 Cor. 9: 7, 8.

### The Grace of Giving Must Be a Free Service

O beloved brethren, do you not see that in putting tithing upon the compulsory legal footing of the Old Testament you are robbing us of the "more excellent way" of the gospel? Do you not see that the money is not so important with Christ as the volunteer and willing service of the heart, rather than the constraint? Just as we tell brethren that nine tenths with God's blessing will go farther than the whole ten tenths without, so let us tell you that less under the gospel freedom will do far more for Christ's cause than more under legalism and constraint. We may have all the benefits of the tithing system if we will make it wholly free and voluntary, and take care to keep it so. The Christian is perfectly free to tithe, and he needs to know the blessings of the grace of giving. Encourage and urge him to tithe as a privilege, not as a duty. If this seem too much for him, let him give all he can, as God hath prospered him, every first day of the week (1 Cor. 16: 2)



and as soon as possible get him into 2 Cor. 9:6, 8.

(Of what we have now said the following is the Summary

1. God wants man to be like Himself, a free giver of good to those whom we can help.
2. He has taught this under the patriarchal system, also under the Mosaic law, and now under the Gospel.
3. The Gospel is far in advance of all other previous systems, because it changes the heart and leads man from a service of constraint into one of great joy and FREE, willing service.
4. The law of divine love in the heart is the "more excellent way" for all servants of Christ, and is to be received as a privilege, never forced upon us, but to be sought and asked for by those who are led to feel their need of it.
5. The power to give gladly, cheerfully, liberally, is a "grace," a "gift" a privilege. We can lead others into it, but cannot force it upon any. If we teach them they MUST tithe, as Moses taught Israel, we may expect the same results, (1) grudging on the part of some, coveting the gift they bestow of necessity, and reaping no real benefit for themselves: (2) Phariseeism on the part of others, glorying in their legal service and expecting salvation while the heart is self-righteous.
6. Let us lead and not drive, coax and not coerce, impart the "grace" rather than induce the "grudging." We may all freely tithe if we will, and no one may forbid. God will richly bless the liberal giver. Tithing will prove but parsimony to some of vast possessions.



## Gospel Reasons For Tithing

*Added to the foregoing Sermon to complete some Thoughts, not at the time sufficiently expanded.*

—H. POLLARD

1. The practice of giving a tenth of the increase or net income was God's own plan of systematic giving, made known to the patriarchs before the law, and afterwards made part of the Mosaic law. It was practiced by the people of God with the divine approval and command, from Abraham's time to the crucifixion, at least two thousand years.

2. We thus have the clearest evidence that could be given us, that this plan is pleasing to God, and by the divine blessing is feasible and good for His people, as a measure of what we ought to give gladly and cheerfully as an offering of love and gratitude to Him. God has thus given us an object lesson for our instruction, and its meaning is UNMISTAKABLE.

3. The law was a "school master," or "child leader," (the literal meaning of the Greek) "unto Christ," that is, unto the gospel dispensation. After we come to the gospel there is a change of law, and "we are no longer under the child leader" but are given the privilege of free service for Him we love (Gal. 3 : 24-26). To illustrate. Until the age of twenty-one a young man is legally a minor, obliged to obey his parents by law. They can compel his obedience up to that time. This is right and wise, in order that in childhood and youth the parent may impress upon him principles of rectitude and wise conduct. When the son is twenty-one he is free from parental restriction



and need no longer obey unless he choose. However, this does not absolve him from carrying out in life the good habits taught him by his parents. He can do so if he will, he is not compelled to observe them, but if he has been well and wisely trained he **WILL STILL DO SO**. He will gladly and of his own free will keep up the right principles to which he has long been habituated, not from compulsion but from choice, and this **FREE CHOICE** at once establishes his character as a son worthy of his parentage.

4. If, after God has shown for two thousand years his approval of the tithing plan, we refuse to give even a tenth, because it is not specifically enjoined in the Gospel law of liberty, we may do so, Christ will never tell us we shall tithe, for he has set us free for the express purpose that we may prove our love for Him. But how can we for a moment take the ungenerous advantage of the freedom given, to adopt a lower standard of living and giving than taught under the law?

5. Nay, beloved in Christ! We ourselves are his, body and soul, for time and for eternity; and we love to make the fullest possible consecration of all to Him, that words can declare or the heart conceive. Millions have gladly accepted death for His sake, and counted it a privilege to suffer all manner of privation and shame and physical anguish for Him, and it were indeed a privilege thus to "suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8: 17). Therefore we ought not to think of giving less than a tenth of our increase if we have aught to give.

6. It is hard for those who have been accustomed to look at this question from the legal side,



to see the superiority of Gospel freedom. It looks to them as if it would not secure the obedience God desires. So the early Jewish converts must have felt when Paul and other apostles taught the "perfect law of liberty" under the gospel, from all legal forms and ceremonies. Yet the apostles, too, were all Jews, rigid legalists by early training. Taught by the Holy Spirit they have left us free in Christ. If we use that freedom to indulge the love of money or any fleshly desire that even the law would not permit, we thus frustrate the grace of God to our own injury. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man, as he purposeth in his heart so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." Gracious Father, how glad we are that we may devote at least a tenth of thy bounty back to thee, as a slight token of our love. Yet all we have beside is thine. Use us fully we beseech thee, for thine own glory.

**For this Tract Address**

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